and Mrs Fujimoto

Project I.D. No. 116

NAME: Fujimoto, Kyoichi DATE OF BIRTH: 1897 PLACE OF BIRTH: Yamaguchi
Age: 79 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: High School

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: Fall 1911 Age: 15 M.S. Y.Y. Port of entry: San Fran.
*Occupation/s: 1. Paper Delivery Boy 2. Domestic worker 3. School boy 4. Farmer *
Place of residence: 1. Stockton, Ca. 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian Church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION: * 5. Restaurant manager 6. Insurance Agent
Name of assembly center: Stockton (Race track)
Name of relocation center: Arkansas
Dispensation of property: Home - sold Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. School Head Janitor 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: Ice Cutter (3 mos.) & Bus Boy (5 yrs)
Left camp to go to: Chicago, Illinois (In 1943)

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: 1948
Address/es: 1. Chicago, Illinois (5 yrs) 2. Stockton, California
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian Church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Toshi Kusunoki Date: 2/16/75 Place: Stockton, Ca.
translator: mrs. Castle

Name: Kyoichi Fujimoto

Age: 79 years old

Date of Birth: 1897

Place of Birth: Yamaguchi Ken

The time of entry into the USA: 1911

Age at the time of entry: 15

Major Occupation: Life Insurance Agent

Relocation Camp: Arkansas

Interviewer: Toshi Kusunoki

Date of Interview: Feb. 16, 1975

Place of Interview: Stockton

Translator: Mrs. Sumiye Carter

Typist: Heihachiro Takarabe

Question: Please state your name.

Answer: My name is Kyoichi Fujimoto.

Q; How do you write it in Chinese letters?

A: Fujimoto is like wistaria's Fuji and moto is like a book. Kyo is like a palace and Ichi is a letter similar to season. I'll write it on the paper.

Q: I know what you mean. I'll copy it. When were you born?

A: I was born in Meiji, thirtith year, 1897. Iwas born in Yamaguchi Ken .

Q: Did you say that you were born in Yamaguchi Ken?

A: Yes.

Q: What do you remember about your childhood life? Do you remember anything particularly well?

A: I was born in the thirtith of Meiji. When I was about to finish 8th grade in Japanese school my father who was living in Stockton knew a man called Jinnojo Hayashi who also live here in Stockton. He arranged the way so that I could come to America when I became 15. It was a fall I remember. I arrived at San Francisco in the fall of 1911.

Q: Many second and third generation Japanese here would like to know what living conditions were like in Japan when You were growing up there. Do you remember anything?

A; I was too little to notice much of anything. I left Japan when I was 15. I arrived at San Francisco. It was the time President Taft was visiting San Francisco. There was

There was much commotion in the town. My father couldn't come and meet at the port. I was sent to the immigration office in Angel Island. I stayed there ten days with a group of stowaways. There was a big celebration going on because of the President's visit. Many offices were closed. Finally when it was over my father came to Angel Island and I met him for the first time in my life. I was allowed to enter San Francisco. I went to Stockton from San Francisco. I stayed at Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi's place in Stockton. Mr. Hayashi was an agent for "Nichibei Daily". He also engaged in the business of growing asparagus down the river. He was well known amoung the people in Stockton, as well as Mr. Kinji Ushijima. Mr. Matsumoto was well educated man, very intelligent. Many people depended on his knowledge. He was too educated for just an ordinary farmer.

Q: Where was you father then?

A: He used to live here. He was with Mr. Jinnojyo Hayashi and Mr. Renjutsu Matsusita. They all came from the same area in Japan. My father worked in the asparagus field on Orlude Island.

Q: Where is this?

A: It is in the San Joaquin River. The Island still produces asparagus as of today. It will be harvesting time in another week or so. I went to the Island first, but I wanted to go to school, so I moved into twon to 121 East Rafaet,

Stockton, where Mr. Hayashi operated the "Nichibei Daily". In that building one section was for the newspaper. The second floor was a picture studio run by a Japanese, Mr. Niiyama. In the dark corner of the same building there was a Presbyterian Church. It was a very small room as I remember.

Q: When did your father arrived in Stockton?

A: He left Japan when I was a baby. He went to Hawaii first, then came here. He was here about fourteen yours when I came to America. I was told that I was two years old when he came to the States.

Q: Did you come here all by yourself from Japan?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What kind of a ship were you on?

A: The name of the ship was the "Tenyo-Maru". Yokohama Port was only a name then. There was no pier. The ship stayed far away from the shore. There were row-boats that ransported us to the ships. I left Japan in the middle of the fall. I remember how pretty Mount Fuji looked.

Q: Do you remember what kind of people were on the ship?

A: There were no children of my age going to a foreign country then. I was the only child on that ship. There were not too many immigrants then. The time was before the picture bride. It was difficult to come to America in those days.

Q: Was there something memorable that happened while you were on the ship?

A: There wasn't anything special that I remember. The ship took seventeen days.

Q: Did you have any idea what America was like?

A: I had no opportunity to read many books about America. I knew the story about George Washington, "The Cherry Tree and HIS Ax" the story telling about his honesty, also I knew that the country is a Christian country.

Q: Did your father tell you about America?

A: No, not really. I never lived with my father. As soon as I came to America I lived in town while my father lived in the country side. My mother divorced my father and left me when I was little. I grew up not knowing my parents. My grandmother took care of me. I did not have a very happy childhood. I remember that I cried a lot. I knew that I was an orphan.

Q: I understand that you stayed on Angel Island for a chile. When were you allowed to come into San Francisco.

A: Like I mentioned before, because I had no one to come and get me, I wasn't able to enter San Francisco. There was much commotion because of the visit of the President. Many governmental agencies were closed including Angel Island. My father came to San Francisco but he was

unable to meet me. I was sent to Angel Island. I stayed on the Island for about two weeks. I think I told you that I had to room with stowaways.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: About two weeks. I had just come from Japan. I wasn't used to the food there. I couldn't eat. The food smelled awful. For two weeks I drank nothing but many cups of coffee. I put lots of cubes of sugar in them. I survived somehow.

Q: After that what did you do?

A: As soon as my father came and got me out of Angel Island, I entered San Francisco. From San Francisco I went to Orlude Island. I stayed with my father about a week, then I left there for town. I lived with Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi and Mr. Makoto Kobayashi, who was a pastor. They were my guardians. I went to school from there.

Q: How long did you stay in San Francisco?

A: I stayed only two days.

Q: What was San Francisco like then?

A: It wasn't like these days. It was right after the big earthquake; very few automobiles were on the streets. It wasn't too pretty a city then. It was a big city I thought.

Q: What impressed you most?

A: I was impressed by the beauty of the harbor. There were ferries on the bay. There was no bridge then.

Q: You mean you crossed the bay by a boat?

A: That is right. There was the pier at Santa Fe. There was a train station near the pier. Every time a boat came in a train wanted for the customers. I took a train from Santa Fe. It took around seventy minutes to get to Orlud Island. I was flabbergasted by the country's broadness. There were no mountains that I could see. Also there were not many houses.

Q: How about the language problem?

A: I couldn't speak English at all then. I knew the English alphabet. I was interested in the idea of going to America. I taught myself the English alphabet when I was ten. I could spell my name in English and words like Japan, Yokohama etc. in English.

Q: Could you tell me about the life in Orlude Island?

A: I wanted to go to school so I moved in to town, 121 La Feat. Mr. Niitsuta had a picture studio in the up stairs and Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi had the "Nichibey Daily" in the down stairs. I lived in one of the rooms there. I got up every early in the morning and delivered the newspaper.

Q: The papers were Japanese newspapers?

A: Yes, they were the "Nichibei Daily". Later they changed the name to "Hokubei Asahi". Also I delivered the "Shinsekai" and the "Ofu Nippo". At the time "Ofu Nippo" was published in Sacramento. In the morning I delivered the "Nichibei" and the "Shinsekai". At lunch time I delivered the "Ofu Nippo". After school, around 3:30 in the afternoon I went to an American family's house and helped the cook and washed dishes. I got some money for doing that. I lived in the room next to the Presbyterian Church. In the same building there lived Mr. Niitsuta who operated a picture studio. He had a wife. His wife cooked for all of us, including the pastor. Mr. Ji-nojo Hayashi and I , we lived together for sometime, that is why I'm very familiar with a church because I lived with a pastor for a while.

Q: How many copies of the Japanese Newspaper did you deliver?

A: About eighty copies a day. Then "Nichibei Daily" had more subscription than the other papers.

Q: You mean the other paper that was in this area?

A: Yes, that was in this town. There were many Japanese who lived down the river. In the Island many other Japanese lived in the camps. There was a ferry that went to the islands every morning carrying the mail. There were around fifty copies of the newspapers that came from San Francisco to be delivered to the Island.

Q: Were the newspapers published daily?

A: Yes, they were. I got up every morning at five. I went to the post office and waited. The post office opened at six. I received the papers and sorted them. The ferry made four trips till nine o'clock in the morning. I got on the boat with the papers and went to different islands. After I finished delivering on the islands, I went around the town. I still remember how many copies I delivered. The copies were usually around eighty. I carried two bags full of the newspapers, one bag for the "Nichibei" and the other for the "Shinsekai". I hardly had time to eat breakfast in those days. I usually ate an apple andran for school. During the lunch break I delivered the "Ofu Nippo". The newspapers were usua-ly thirty or thirty,five copies. There were many days that I didn't eat breakfast nor lunch. I did not have a very easy life.

Q: Would you tell me about school?

A: Yes. I entered first grade in the elementary school I finished 8th grade in four years, then I entered high school here in 1917...no, it was 1913. I was the first Japanese to graduate from high school in this town.

Q: Were there many Japanese who lived here when you came?

A: Yes, there were. It was the time that they started cultivating down the river. Many Japanese laborers gathered down there. I would estimate that around 6,000 Japanese were

here, perhaps 2,000 in the town, the rest of them lived in the country and the islands. Most of them were young bachelors.

Q: Didn't they go to school?

A: No, they were already grown men. They were too late to enter elementary school. I was sixteen but fortunately I wassmall in size, still I was pretty big compared with the boys eight or nine years old. It was very hard for me at the beginning. I told myself that I should bear it for a while. It was the time that the Presbyterian Church and the Buddhist church for the Japanese started here. There were all kinds of Japanese here. They needed some organization. Many of themindulged in gambling. Most of them were young men. Many of them were like my father. He went to Hawaii first and there was an immigration law that prohibited the Japanese from coming to the States in the future. They thought that if they missed the chance, they would never get in to America. Many men entered America in a hurry. They were all about thirty years old, young men but too old to enter elementary school. They must work; besides there were no schools for those men here. They worked as a house-boy, a cook or a farm laborer. If you want to know the history of the Japanese and the churches in Stockton you must know Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi, Mr. Kinji Ushijima and Mr. Matsumoto who came from Kumamoto Ken. They started

agricultural businesses down the river. You must know them so that you will understand how the Japanese immigrant community in Stockton was formed. I would like you to know that at the beginning there were only sixty Japanese in Stockton. Mr. Kinji Ushijima and Mr. Matsumoto thought that there was a good farming opportunity down the river. They found a Caucasian financier and dredged the rich soil from the river. They dredged fertile soil from the river and made an island in the middle of the river. Mr. Ushijima started this farming. Because of Mr. Ushijima the farming was very successful and prospered. Mr. Matsumoto who came from Kumamoto Ken started cultivating Sharman Island. He was a stockholder in the "Stockton Hotel", which is the oldest building in Stockton. He was a founder of the "Shima Tract", which is operating as of today. It is a strip of island of about seven acres. Half of the island was natural so that it was easy to build the land on it. It was a very successful operation. His operation was interesting enough to obtain the Caucasians's financings. He got enough capital and started cultivating Bacon Island in 1911. There are few Japanese still living in the Island. When I came here at first that island did not exist. It was a little mound of dirt in the river. Like I said before, the farming was very successful. There were all kinds of people. All of them had a job. Soon they induldged themselves in gambling. The Chases owned the gambling establishments.

The Japanese laborers started to go there and many lost all of their earnings on gambling. Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi, the person who took care of me was concerned about the matter.

Q: Was he a pastor?

A: No, he wasn't, but when he lived in Tokyo he met a Caucasian minister but after arriving in Stockton he gathered many youg men and formed a bible study group. He worried very much about the gambling problem. He wanted someway to stop it. There was a man, Makoto Kobayashi, who was from Hokkaido, he had a funny mustache, I used to call him "Uncle". He was studying theology at San Raffael Theological School. Mr. Hayashi invited him and started a church. There was no church for the Japanese here before this. There were no followers, no funds, nor financial backing. It was like a lone house on the prairie. Mr. Hayashi provided a small dark room in the building where he had his office and invited minister Makoto Kobayashi.

Q: When was this?

A: It was in 1910, the year of Meiji 43, just a year before I came here. I am the eldest one to belong to this church. There is Mr. Shibakawa, he is 96 and still alive but he joined the church later than I did. I am the eldest of all the churhc members.

Q: What kind of work did the Japanese laborers do then?

A: You mentioned asparagus. Were they cultivating asparagus then?

A: Yes, they were. There was a cannery. They ca-ned asparagus and sold quite a lot.

Q: What else?

A: There were potatoes. In those days asparagus wasn't familiar to the Caucasians. They didn't know how to cook nor eat it. Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi published articles about asparagus and taught the people how to fix it. He was a very small man, but he was filled with brain and gut. He would go to the President of the United States and settle a matter if it were ca-led for.

Q: You mentioned that there were around 6,000 Japanese laborers here. Were they engaged in agricultural work? They did not work on the railroad, did they?

A: The laborers worked on the railroad before California became an agricultural state. There was not much work available for the first Japanese immigrants. They worked on the railroad in Wyoming. They went as far as the Mid-West. After a while they formed small communities and engaged in various kinds of work at the time when the Chinese were persecuted. The Caucasians did not like them. The Japanese replaced the Chinese positions and obtained the reputation of hard workers. The Caucasians trusted

the reputationand hired the Japanese by the multitude. It was the era before machinery. Most work required human labor. The machines replace lots of human labors now, but in those days they had to have human labor. There were no job shortages but the labor was cheap. You worked all dayand got paid around $1.50. I used to work at the farm on my summer vacation. I was as big as a grown man, but I was only paid $1.00 since I was under eighteen, besides it was hard for me to get a job.

Q: How much did you received as a newspaper boy?

A: I delivered the "NIchibei" and the "Shinsekai". I received $3.00 each for a month. The "Ofu Nippo" paid me $3.00 also. It was a good deal because it was a small volume. I usually received around fifteen extra papers. I was allowed to sell them to the people who were going back to the islands for 5¢ a copy. I usually had costomers, five or six ever- day. I could use the income for my spending money.

Q: Did you live with Jinnojyo Hayashi after you graduated from high school?

A: I lived with him for a while then I got a job as "living in school-boy." I lived with the family who hired me.

Q: Was the family Caucasian?

A: Yes, it was. I lived with the family till I finished grammar school and high school. I wanted to go to college but that was beyond my financial means. I worked for Mrs. Esaki, who was operating a farm in Ushijima. The farm consisted of 6,000 acres.

Q: So much! What were the crops?

A: Potatoes, onions, and beans. Mr. Esaki told me that I could have his chice land and if I wanted to go to school I could also. I worked six years for Mr. Esaki. Meanwhile the farm failed and Mr. Esaki was bankrupt. I moved into town. There was a man named Ko-ura. He was an interpreter. I hung about his office like a parasite. Later I had an opportunity to run a restaurant. I ran restaurant for two, three years, then I became an agent for the insurance company. Mr. Yoshida who worked for the insurance company spent the company's money and had to go to prison. I was a mediator for Mr. Yoshida and the insurance company. Meantime I was persuaded to become an agent for the insurance company. Since then, except for the war time, I have worked as an insurance agent for thirty five years. I have the plaque there on the wall. The company I worked for was "The California Western". I got too old so I quit the company ten years ago.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

A: My wife came to a hospital in Hawaii as a nurse. We went to school together when we were little in Japan and kept up the correspondence.

Q: She was from Yamaguchi also?

A: That is right. I wrote to her from America. She worked at a hospital in Hawaii and I asked her to be my wife.

Q: Would you tell me about your wedding? Did you get married at the Presbyterian Church in Stockton?

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto answering) It was a small wedding. I was very upset about that. It was in June 1926. Rev. Kobayashi and Mr. Komura were the only people who came to the ceremony. I suppose it was the way many of us did then. I felt so sorry for myself. I came from a decent family in Japan.

Q: Your parents lived in Japan then?

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) Yes.

A: I understand how she felt. She didn't know how to be poor. She was born in a house with her parents, brother and sister. She grew up without knowing hunger. I was an orphan. I had no house and didn't know my parents. I had a father but never saw him. I had no mother. My wife was not like me and had a different idea but it was understandable.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was thirty.

Q: What kind of people usually came to church on Sunday to worship?

A: Mainly the men with wives. There were not many bachelors that came. Maybe twelve or thirteen. We had around twenty attending every Sunday.

Q: What was the most memorable or interesting sermon that you remember when you were young? Your story about the gambling was interesting to me. There is no such thing going on here anymore. What was a pastor's work like then?

A: In those days a minister was usually an unmarried man. There was no compensation like these days. He was given a small room. I used to do laundry with him. He had no salary and he was very poor. There was Presbyterian Church, but there was no other denomination for the Japanese. There was a man named Masasuke Kobayashi. He was a superviser for the Presbytery. Later he joined the Salvation Army in San Francisco. There was a man by the name of Makoto Kobayashi. It was very confusing since both were M. Kobayashi. Both worked in the ministry. There was the law which made it impossible for the Japanese to own the land or work on it. Mr. Jinnojo Hayashi and the others gave up farming and went back to Japan. The population of the Japanese in Stockton decreased tremendously.

The state law prohibited the Japanese to own or farm the land. The Japanese were out of work. Many :apanese pulled out from Stockton. A few years later the war began and the Japanese in Stockton disappeared completely.

Q: How was the depression time in Stockton?

A: The bad time was 1915.

Q: I understood that was 1929.

A: In 1929 many corprations and banks went broke. The bottom dropped out of New York Exchange. It was the worst of the depression. It started in 1915. I remember that there was the San Francisco Exposition in 1915. The Exposition was intended to boost the economy but the Expo. failed and San Francisco lost lots of money. We realized then that the depression was with us. I was a teenager but I heard enough talking about it and knew. The depression continued and the worst came in 1929. The New York Exchange was in bad trouble. Many banks were forced to close.

Q: How did that affect Stockton and its islands?

A: Because of the depression we couldn't sell the crops. In Ushijima I saw the people dumping potatoes in the dump. The crops were piled in the warehouses but couldn't be sold. There was a Japanese bank in Sacramento. It went bankrupt also.

Q: Did you marry before the depression?

A: We married in 1926.

Q: I suppose life wasn't easy?

A: My wife used to work in Hawaii's hospital and was paid regularly. I worked as an insurance salesman. I didn't do badly at all. I lived here a long time. I took the position of Mr. Yoshida who went to prison. For some reason the people trusted in me. There was a man, Mr. Shibuhara, who worked at the New York Life. The company was my company's rival. I bought insurance from him once. I found out that Mr. Shibuhara told the people that Fujimoto is trustworthy. He is not like Yoshida. I knew lots of the people since I practically grew up in Stockton. I did well on my job. I went to the convention every year. Financially I was better off than ever.

Q: Did you own a house?

A: At first we rented a house. Later I was able to buy a house. It was located not far from here. Soon the war started and I was forced to sell the house. We brought this house after working five years in Chicago.

Q: Could you tell me more about the first house that you bought?

A: It was very cheap, $2,500. The same house was sold after the war for $7,000 to $8,000.

Q: Could you buy a house then?

A: No. I couldn't. I had to borrow an American citizen's name. It was against the law. I had a friend whom I went to high school with. His name was Don. He became a judge in the Stockton Court. He advised me, "There were many who wanted to persecute the Japanese. If you own a house in Stockton you had better get rid of it in a hurry." I sold the house before I entered the camp.

Q: Now, I'll ask you about the time of the war. Would you tell me about the time of Pearl Harbor?

A: It was December 7th. I knew there was a war approaching. It was Sunday morning, very cold but a beautiful day. I went to play golf. There was a man who worked on the "Nichibei Daily". His name was Mr. Endo. He came up to me and said, "The war has begun. I think that you had better go home for today." After that day the Caucasian friends whom I had known since they were little, their attitudes towards me changed.

Q: How? Would you tell me more about that?

A; I joined a group that played golf a long time ago. I was very popular among many Caucasian friends. I had lots of friends. Many Caucasians knew me personally. After the war began they tried to avoid me. I felt uneasiness. I quit playing golf completely soon after I noticed this.

[illegible] orders from the government that prohibited [illegible] Japanese [illegible]

There were orders from the government that prohibited a group of more than five Japanese gathering together. We were limited in our movements in the States and after seven o'clock there was a curfew for the Japanese. The Japanese almost could not go out at all. If you break the laws you would be arrested.

Q: How was the housing situation?

A: Many Japanese had to sell or get out of their houses. The law couldn't touch the Japanese who had U.S. citizenship. Some people lived with a family who had U.S. Citizenship. We stayed with Mr. Oraka's family. We could only go our for two or three blocks, that was all. Mean while the evacuation order came.

Q: What was the attitude of the towns people towards the Japanese?

A: There were many who were sympathetic. They knew me; that I ment no harm to America. There were some Chinese that were mean to the Japanese. After the Japanese aremy attacked Manila in the Philippines some Filipinos and the Chinese got together and attacked the Japanese in America. They committed the murders.

Q: Were there many Filipinos in Stockton?

A: There were. I had a friend, Mr. Kino, he was a newspaper man. He also worked at a garage part of the newspaper office. He was shot to death. There was another man.

I forgot his name. He used to operate a rooming house here. He was killed also. We felt danger.. Usually there were the Filipinos who listened to the Chinese propaganda and did the murders. The Japanese came to think that we would be better off if we would go into the camps and have some protection. Shortly after these incidents the evacuation order came. I remember that it was in May. We gathered at the center of the town here.

Q: In what year? Do you remember?

A: In May, 1942. We could only take what we could carry, a blanket, a suit case, then we rode a bus and went to the Assembly Center. It was the place which was the site of the exposition.

Q: Did you go to San Francisco?

A: No, it was here in Stockton. There were some houses and barns. There was a race track for horses. We cleaned the barns and some of us lived in them. We stayed there for a half year, then all of us who were here had to move to Arkansas. Some of the Japanese went to Tule Lake.

Q: Were the people who lived in the Assembly Center from here or near Stockton?

A: They were all from Stockton.

Q: How long did you stay?

A: A half year, then we moved to Arkansas.

Q: Would you stop for a minute. Please tell me more about the living condition of the Assembly Center? How many of you were there?

A: The entire Japanese population of Stockton. I would say around 2,400.

Q: You mean counting the women and the children?

A: Yes. We were given a small room. The family of three got a little larger room than the family of two. After a while we were all allotted some duties. At that time things were disorganized. The government had no plans yet. There was no balanced diet. We were fed boiled potatoes three times a day. My skin broke out and itched. I had a troubled time. I called my friends and they brought some food for me.

Q: Mrs. Fujimoto, what do you remember about the place?

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) I remember the waiting line. I had to stand up and wait a long time to get food. It wasn't a g-od life; what I thought was unfair treatment. The government upt only us Japanese into the camps. The Germans and Itallians were free. I didn't think that was fair.

Q: Where in Arkansas did you go to?

A: Let me think...I've forgotton. Was it Jerome? Jerome had two camps. Ther people from Los Angeles stayed in one. What was the name of our camp...

Q: Not Misora?

A: No, it wasn't. Jerome's other camp housed the P.O.Ws' whose ships were sunk in the South Pacific.

Q: How did you get to Arkansas?

A: We all rode on the train. It was an old fashioned train. It made an awful noise as it ran. I thought that it was going to fall apart. It took a long time, five, or six days.

Q: What did you do with your belongings?

A: They were shipped by freight train.

Q: What did you do with the things that you couldn't bring with you?

A: I left them at my friends house. They were all gone when I got back. Some one stole them.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) I tried to sell some. The things I paid $10 for I couldn't sell for more than $1.00 or 90¢. It was so bad. I tried to tell the younger generation about the hard times. I don't thing they understood me.

Q: Did you have any children with you then?

A: We had a girl.

Q: How old was she then?

A: She was twelve or thirteen. She was going to high school then.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) She went to 9th grade in the camp. There was no higher grade in the camp school. We got out of the camp and went to Chicago. She finished high school and one more year to finish college when we moved back here. We left her at Ann Arbor and went back to Stockton. A house was hard to find then. We managed to find a small house and bought it. We didn't need a large house for there were only two of us.

Q: How was the every day living in the camp?

A: It was better organized there than Stockton. We all had a job, cleaning, farming, etc. I was a head janitor for the school. My wife was a dish washer. I received $9.00 a month. Maybe it was $8.00. I'm not sure. That was an allowance. There wasn't much to do. I had lived in California and I was frightened by the summer storms, the lightening and thunder. It wasn't like a summer in Japan either. A summer in Japan was pretty. I still remember the fireflies crossing the streams. In Arkansas rattle snakes were bad also. Many young men went into the forest every day and cut wood and brought it back to the camp. The wood was used for fuel. There was

abundant wood in the forest. The government owned some land that we could cultivate but we were used to the California farming. It didn't work too well in Arkansas. Arkansas had much more rain compared to California. Meanwhile there was the pledge. We all had to take the test and we were separated into groups; the pro-American and the anti-American.

Q: How many of you were there?

A: We were about the same number of people as the population of the Assembly Center. We all moved to Arkansas. We were divided into two groups. One group was pro-American and the other was anti-American.

Q: Was this applied to the Nisei also?

A: Yes. The people who would sign the pledge to America could get out from the camp if they wanted to and seek a job somewhere. The government gave them train fare. The people who did not pledge for America were sent to Tule Lake. I've heard that they caused headaches for the American government. Some of them were sent back to Japan. It wasn't forced deportation. It was on a volunteer basis. The touble among us has been steeled a bit since then.

Q: How did the camp population of Arkansas react to the pledge?

A: Most of us were pledged to America. Most of us had a family then. We thought that it was better to keep quiet.

We still couldn't go back to California. I heard that the "Edge Water Hotel" in Chicago was hiring people. I left for Chicago.

Q: In what year?

A: 1943.

Q: How long did you stay in the camp?

A: I entered the camp in October. I stayed there eight months I think. No, that is not right. I lived ther close to two years.

Q: Did your family all leave for Chicago?

A; No, my wife and daughter stayed in the camp. I went to Chicago first myself. I wanted to see how I could make a living there. My wife and daughter were safe in the Camp. It wasn't a nice school but the camp provided school for my daughter. I went to the "Edge Water Hotel". There were several jobs I could get. The pay was low and there was no advancement. They asked me, "What kind of job do you want to take?" I told them, "The most hard and disliked job." They gave me an ice cutting job. They told me that most people quit before a week passes. I told them that I would try it. It was a hard job, lots of work, too. I hung on two, three months, then there was an opening for a bus-boy in the dining room. It was a job helping the waitresses, cleaning the table, washing the dishes, etc. I discovered that the tips were pretty good.

Q: Do you remember how much?

A: At the beginning it wasn't too much but after a while the customers knew me. I talked with them once in a while and they asked me how I came to work there. I told them that I was an insurance salesman in California, but because of the war I was working there. I told them that I meant no harm to America and had a wife and a child back in the camp. They sympathized with me and everytime they sent me on errand like fetching a drink from the bar or getting a pack of cigarettes, they gave me a tip. It was quite a lot, 25¢ was enough for a tip. Some of them gave me 50¢, $1.00. Every night when I went home my pocket was full of coins. Sometimes I netted $10.00 to $12.00.

The monthly pay was $45.00 with two meals a day. The pay was low because of the tips. In those days there was a shortage of manpower. Many grown men had to go to the war. I usually got up early and was at the restaurant by six o'clock in the morning. I could quit work at 4 o'clock in the afternoon but when the dining room was busy I continued work till one o'clock in the morning. I harmed my health then. I needed work so I kept working. It was hard because I had to spend such long hours on the concrete floor. I somehow continued my work till I could come back to California. I changed hotels once but I worked as a bus-boy the whole time I was in Chicago.

Q: What was the reason that you decided to come back to California?

A: I had a friend who lived in Berkeley. His name was Takemori. He went back to California before I did. He told me that if the business was good he would let me know. I was experiencing the recession in Chicago. I had to quit my job and had to find the next one. I decided to go back to California. My daughter was going to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and my wife didn't want to go back to California yet. I went back alone. I looked for houses everyday for a long time and finally found this house. At that time this area wasn't a bad residential area. It has begun to deteriorate since too many Mexicans moved into the area.

Q: In what year did you come back here?

A: In 1948.

Q: Was the war over then?

A: Yes. There were not too many Japanese who had come back here yet. There were almost no businesses run by the Japanese. Perhaps only three or four stores run by the Japanese. I planned to make my living in Berkeley but after a while friends persuaded me to stay in Stockton. I found a house. The house like this could be bought for

$2,000 when I left for the camp. I had to pay $7,500 when I came back from the camp. It doubled or tripled in price.

Q: Did you take a train when you came back to California?

A: Yes.

Q: How was the trip?

A: WHEN I left for Chicago the train was full of soldiers. It was packed. No place to sleep. The people were standing between the box cars. Coming back the train wasn't crowded at all. I could lay down and sleep in the train.

Q: Did you experience any ill treatment from the Americans?

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) Every one was kind to us.

A: I was used to living in a big city. Only few Japanese lived here then. I felt so lonely. I wondered why I ever came back to this place. After I got used to it, it didn't bother me.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) We are happy now that we came back here. Big cities have too many crimes in these days. We have some problems here, too, but nothing like a big city. I am grateful that we made our home here in Stockton.

Q: How was the life here since you came back from Chicago? It seems that you have to start living here all over again. What was on you mind?

A: When I was in Chicago the insurance company I used to work for sent me a message. They wanted me to go back to Stockton and work for them again. I sent a letter to a branch of the company that I may come back. They sent letters often to me that they would like to have me. I had a friend. He worked at the "Nichibei Newspaper". Mr. Endo was his name. He also worked as an agent for the "Occidental Insurance Co." He came to Chicago once. I asked him, "Can you make a living by selling insurance in Stockton?" He told me, "Make a living? I make $700 to $800 a month."

I felt better after I heard his story and decided to go back to my old occupation. The insurance company in Stockton welcomed me. They said that there were a few Japanese asking about me. I hadn't renewed my license during the war time. I had to take the examination again. I went to Sacramento and took the exam, but I failed it. I had to wait three weeks for the next test. If i failed it then, I would have had to wait one year for the next exam. I studied hard for the exam after I had failed. The manager at the branch of the insurance company gave me a test and said, "I thinkthat you'll make it this time." I took the exam and easily passed the second time. I was allowed to work as a full fledged insurance salesman.

I already had around fifteen customers waiting for me. I was busy. Within the next three months I sold $1000000 worth of insurance. In three months perhaps I sold $140,000 to $150,000. I was selected to attend the insurancemen's convention every year for three consecutive years. I sold lots of insurance in three years.

Q: How was the church then?

A: Rev. Oyama was transferred from Chicago and he was the minister for the Presbyterian Church here. He was a hard worker. The members of the church increased. He went back to Chicago after leaving here. The Presbyterian Church here was started by Rev. Makoto Kobayashi, then Kadoike, Rev. Hata, Rev. Sakaguchi, after him was Rev. Oyama, then Rev. Koga.

Q: You mean Rev. Sumio Koga:

A: You are right. He was not in very good health. He could speak Japanese and English well but the membership did not increase. We replaced him with a young Caucasian minister fresh from the seminary. He wasn't concerned very much about the finances of the church. Soon the church was in bad financial shape.

We didn't have too many members and the church was financially poor to start with. We couldn't pay a minister's salary. We had several Caucasian ministers.

They stayed only a short while, then they were gone. We finally found a young Nisei. He was twenty four or five, just graduated from a seminary. His name was Sato. He couldn't get along with an elder, Mr. Kunimori. Mr. Kunimori did a lot for the church. When the church was in bad shape financially he donated more tha his share and did some pastoral work when the church was without a minister. Rev. Sato made Mr. Kunimori not welcomed to the church and in the end he was fired by the session. He went back to Los Angeles where his parents then were.

After him came the present pastor, Rev. Masada. He is not very good on sermons, but he has a good personality. He studies hard. He couldn't speak Japanese last year but he speaks it well now. His wife works hard for the church also. We were very impressed by him. I know Rev. Igarashi who had a parish in Sacramento. He used to live in Stockton and was a good friend of Mr. Jinnojyo Hayashi. He passed away not too long ago. He told me about Rev. Masada. "I know him as a young lad. I think that he'll make a great minister."

He works in many areas of the minsitry. He holds many positions in the Presbytery. Whenever he has time he visits patients in the hospitals. He visits the patients and

prays for them to get well. Mr. Yoshihara, a newspaper man, a Buddhist, told me once, "When I was in the hospital no Buddhist priest came to see me, but Rev. Masada, whom I never met before came. He prayed for me." His wife works beside him. They are very active. Because of them the church, which once was down so much, has been brought back to life again. I go to church andfeel the warmth. The membership of the church has increased.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) The minister before him was never on time. He was always late showing up at the church. Rev. Masada is never like that. We are all impressed by him. The minister before him never admitted a person to become a church member unless he was baptized. The new minister did away with this rule. He worked with the Sunday School children whose parents were not churhc members. The kids brought the donation envelop home. The parents usually put some money in when the kids went to churhc.

The church's finance is in lots better shape compared to what it was before. We are out of debt. We are doing better than ever. All the members of the church are very happy. All of the church members agree that we have a great minister. He is a man we respect, and we want to learn a lot from him.

A: He even takes care of a little janitorial work. He is a very nice man.

Q: I would like to conclude this interview very soon. As you are a first generation of Japanese, what do you feel about Sansei? They are going to colleges or may still be in high school. Do you have any advice to give to them?

A: Sansei... They are different from the Nisei. The Nisei were raised by the first generation of the Japanese. Although they never lived in Japan, we can get the meaning through. The Sansei were not. They don't understand our ideas or values. They are completely Americanized. They don't agree with an old man like me on anything. It is no use telling them. All they do is get angry. They think they are equal to the Caucasians and the society treats them equally.

The Sansei has no feeling that he is a second citizen. The Nisei is concerned about his origin. He figures it is better to let the Caucasian take the initiative. The Nisei have their inferiority complex which they inherited from their parents. The Sansei has no feeling of inferiority. They can be friendly with Negroes and Mexicans which we could not do. I would very much wish that my

daughter would marry a Japanese instead of a Negro no matter how great he is. The Sansei has no thought of this kind. They figure it is only the coloration of the skin. I have no qualification to give advice to the Sansei. I have two grandchildren who are Sansei. My daughter rea-ly doesn't know what to do with them. Tell them soemthing and they get mad. We'll have to listen what they say.

Q: I think that I see some evidences that the Sansei, especially those who are in colleges are trying to go back to an old nationalism. Somewhat like the first generation did years ago. Don't you think so?

A: I used to take care of my grandsons. I remember when the oldest one was ten. He has a brother two years younger than he is. He used to tell his brother, "We will have to take care of Grandpa in his old age because he is taking care of us now." I was impressed by his thinking. He may not have completely forgotten the thought but I don't hear him saying that anymore.

They don't have much spending money but evry Christmas they spend lots of thought in choosing the gifts they send to Grandmother and me. We don't expect them to do that. They live so far from us, in Pennsylvania. The oldestonone will be twenty this coming June. He will be

finishing the University of Pittsburgh in May. The young one is a freshman in college. He has three more years to go. I don't know what he intends to become yet.

Q: I am about through with my questions. Do you have anything you forgot to tell me?

A: I think that I've said all that I wanted to say.

Q: You are probably not very much affected because you had only a daughter. What was you thought on the Nisei going to the service?

A: I don't think that they went gladly. They had no other choice when they received their draft notice. They all had Japanese parents who received an old fashioned education in Japan and had raised their children the way they thought was right. It was Japan that attacked Pearl Harbor first but America did wrong things before that. America followed policies of discrimination against Japan.

I would say that America insulted Japan, for instance the treaty limiting naval power to a 5 to 3 ratio. The laws in America did not give equal rights to Orientals. It was in the written documents of the government. All of us despised the laws. There was nothing that made us like Americans during the war. We just kept quiet. None of us liked to see the destruction of Japan.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) There were some of us who worshiped America, it seemed.

A: Certainly America was a big country. The living conditions were better. Japan was a very small country packed with people. There were so many troublesome relationships between the people in Japan. Here, if you don't like it you just leave and start a new life somewhere else. I don't hold a grudge against America but the war was caused by many of America's actions towards Japan. For example the land law in Californaia. We could not compete agaist the Caucasians in anyway. It was just like cutting off our arms and legs.

Q: Have you ever thought of going back to Japan?

A: I have no home in Japan. I never gave a thought of going back to Japan. I had a Grandmother who took care of me when I was little. My father went back to Japan and looked after her. I had no obligations in Japan.

Q: Did your father go back to Japan?

A: Yes, when he was forty two. He was a young man. I thought that he was pretty old then. He was single for a long time. After he went back to Japan he married a young woman and took care of my grandmother until her death. I didn't send my father much money but I didn't cause him many worries either. He lived O.K. in Japan. He died when he was seventy three. My half brother took our

family name in Japan. I have no ties in Japan. I went back to Japan once after I finished high school. I worked at Ushijima and saved some money. I was twenty five then.

Q: What was your family's religion in Japan?

A: We were Buddhist, Shinshu. Nishi Honganji is the main temple.

A: (Mrs. Fujinoto) My family belonged to Jyodo Shinshu.

Q: Our main temple is Gion which stands in Higashiyama, Kyoto. It is a beautiful temple. It was built by renowned carpenter, Hidari Jingoro.

Q: Did your father belong to a church in Stockton?

A: No, he was a very firm believer in Buddhism. He had a friend, Matsusuke, who came from the same province my father did. He was taught by Jinnojyo Hayashi and became a Christian. My father and him used to argue a lot about the religions. Neither of them would give in. Every time they got together they played "Shogi" and argued about the religions. Both of them believed in what they wanted to believe. My father became a Buddhist monk after he went back to Japan. I kept going to the Japanese Presbyterian Church in Stockton till I was around sixteen or seventeen. It happened that one of the church members disgraced the church. Mr. Hayashi was somewhat

involved in that case. He quit the church and went back to Japan. I quit going to church also. I started working as a house boy soon after that. The people who employed me had an old lady. She was a very devoted Methodist. She took me to her church. That was the reason that I went to Methodist Sunday School often. After a while I quite going to church. Mr. Hayashi and Mr. Kobayashi were gone. I attended church a few times because my wife insisted. I was never baptized till my eyes troubles. When I was sick.I felt the need of God and was baptized. It was because of Rev. Masada impressed me, too. I wanted to work for the churhc. I was the first one to receive a baptism from Rev. Masada. It was five years ago on Jan. 18th.

AA: (Mrs. Fujimoto) There was a boy from Salt Lake City where Rev. Masada used to live. The boy and my husband were thefirst recipients of Rev. Masada's baptism.

A: There were many like me who went to church till sixteen or seventeen and after that quit going to church. Many girls were the same way. Some of them came back to church after they got married but lots of them quit coming. Church is a holy place. I feel human weakness. You go to church to obtain peace of mind. God will show you the best way to live. It is a good palce to go. It seems for the human the good way of living is hard to do. The evil way is easy. I see the young generation take the evil way. It used to be that more people attended church

on Sunday because there was no other place to go. Now days there are bowling, baseball, theaters, toommany other places that they can go to if they want to. The religions are not much fun. I understand that is why church attendance has been dropping. I think that is one of the reasons this country is in such chaos.

Q: Is there a Buddhist church in Stockton?

A: Yes. There is a big one. I believe that the temple is the largest in America. You should see it if you have an opportunity. Its cost was $1,500,000. I have heard that it is the number one Buddhist temple in the whole U.S.A.. To me Christianity is a living religion whereas Buddhism's main effort is to take care of the souls of the dead. I suppose it depends on the way you like to interpret things. There are good points in Christianity and Buddhism. In Stockton Buddhism is still very strong since the religion is inherited from the Japanese settlers. America is based on the people who believed in Christianity. The sermon is given in English and for the young generation it is easy to understand. I believe the Buddhists here are losing ground. You will find that the children believe in Christianity although their parents are firm believers in Buddhism. Perhaps two out of five children are Christians. My church gains membership because of that.

Q: Is there any Japanese Christian church besides your church in Stockton?

A: No, there is none.

A: (Mrs. Fujimoto) Before I came to the States I thought that there was no other religion in America except Christianity. I went to a Japanese Christian Church while I was in Japan thinking that I was up-to-date. I bought this book in Japan. It is very old. I believe it is a rare book now. It is over fifty years old for sure. I bought it at "Marugen", a famous book store in Kyoto. I came here in July the year of the big earthquake in Tokyo. The earthquake was in September. I bought this book before that. Some of the hymns changed twice since I bought this book. I had to buy a new book because this one was obsolete. I really don't know who will appreciate this book, but I don't think that there are very many books like this remaining anymore. I believe that not many Japanese bought a book like this and brought it to America. I am very proud of this book. I had a chance to broadcast my life in the past at the radio station in Stockton, so I mentioned this book.